

**Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority
Application for Financial Support**

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Applicant: Northwest Indiana Regional Bus Authority

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Applicant's legal status: Formed under IC 36-9-3, Regional Transportation Authorities

Project Description

The Northwest Indiana Regional Bus Authority (RBA) proposal is two-year request for interim funding in order to demonstrate the value of the RBA to existing and potential customers, taxpayers and funding authorities as an operating organization, to develop a regional focus and to initiate improved transportation services. Over the two-year period, 2008 and 2009, the RBA will:

- Initiate reforms to improve accountability and control of regional investment in bus and demand response public transportation vehicles, support systems and infrastructure. The RBA will achieve the reforms through managing the match funding required for Federal Transit Administration capital grants of 80% of project costs and by assuming the roles of grant administration and oversight of bus and demand response projects.
- Develop and implement a regional customer information and real-time service management and control center. With this center, existing and potential new public transportation customers will have ready information and help on services offered in the region and on how best to make use of the services. The management and control portion will provide the capacity for services operated by different service providers (private, not-for-profit and public) to operate seamlessly as a regional system.

- Plan and Implement service improvements that connect communities and reach underserved markets with faster more convenient and reliable services.

The interim funding request is for \$2.9 million for 2008 and \$3.6 million for 2009. With tangible improvements, a permanent funding solution will become palatable to funding authorities at the state, regional and local levels.

With RDA funding approved in early 2006, the RBA has created a Strategic and Operations Plan that defines a bold but practical strategy that will strengthen the region's economy and improve social justice. When fulfilled, service on routes will increase by 80% and on-demand service will more than triple. For an increase of less than \$10 million per year from the region, RBA will be able to leverage over \$30 million in services and capital investment from operating revenues and state and federal funding.

Economic Impact Statement

According to the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority *Comprehensive Economic Development Plan*, dated January 9, 2007, the improved bus services as outlined in the RBA Strategic and Operations Plan will stimulate the economy and increase the quality of life for the citizens of the region, based on their analysis using advanced economic models – REMI Incorporated, Policy Insight and Transight models.

According to the comprehensive economic development plan, the economic benefits for the improvement of Bus and Demand Response Transportation Service accrue from reduced congestion and better access to jobs, healthcare, shopping and amenities. The plan states that the RBA's planned improvements will:

- Increase employment by nearly 7,000 jobs over the period to 2040
- Provide personal income growth of with a net present value of \$4.5 billion over the time horizon
- Generate a net present value of \$7.2 billion in additional economic activity during the same period
- Cause the population to increase in Lake and Porter Counties by approximately 8,670 persons.

Quality of Life Statement

The Regional Bus Authority Strategic and Operations Plan is a bold but very practical approach to improving quality of life in Northwest Indiana. The plan offers benefit to all residents and employers in our communities.

- For the commuter who needs express access to employment destinations and commuter rail services
- For the working family provider, who needs reliable transportation to and from work
- For employers who need reliable workers
- For the senior, who does not want to be dependent on others
- For the person with disabilities, who now waits on average two hours for a mandated pre scheduled service that he or she must book two weeks in advance
- For the business, that passes up our area because we do not offer accessible public transportation.

Social equity is addressed through the provision of regional service that connects people to opportunities across the region and addresses the specific needs of communities with appropriate service. The RBA will provide in one seamless system, service for those who use and want to use transit

The RBA will be the focus coordination and accountability for all services existing and new. RBA will:

- Institute standards for customer service, employee training, and service reliability
- Provide, through a call center and website, travel information on all services in the region
- Implement service management and control system that enables the RBA and service providers to manage jointly and in real time service across providers.

Successful accomplishment of these will provide Northwest Indiana with:

- Greater regional social balance, while maintaining diversity in ethnicity, incomes and lifestyles.
- Reduced dependence on increasingly scarce and high cost petroleum
- Reduced emissions unhealthy and greenhouse gases
- Healthier lifestyles and greater opportunities for exercise, and socializing with neighbors.

Funding Request and Financial Analysis

	2008	2009	Combined
Total Project Cost	\$ 6.9	\$ 8.1	\$ 15.0
RDA Funding	\$ 2.9	\$ 3.6	\$ 6.5
Other Sources			
Federal (Increased)	\$ 4.0	\$ 4.5	\$ 8.5
Indiana	Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged
Local	Unchanged	Unchanged	Unchanged
Total	\$ 4.0	\$ 4.5	\$ 8.5

Assumptions

- Existing service operations would continue to be funded with the existing combinations of local, state and federal revenues
- Additional Federal funding comes from a combination of FTA funds allocated to Northwest Indiana and discretionary sources
- State funding would be unchanged over the interim period because state funding relies on an average of three years of operations.

Proposed RBA Investment by Element			
	Year 1	Year 2	2-Year
Regional Recipient			
Federal Grant Administration and Compliance	\$ 50,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 120,000
Matching Funds for Capital Items	500,000	500,000	1,000,000
Single Dispatch System	610,000	1,500,000	2,110,000
Regional Services	1,110,000	900,000	2,010,000
Administration, Marketing and Service Development	630,000	630,000	1,260,000
Total RBA	\$ 2,900,000	\$ 3,600,000	\$ 6,500,000

Project Timeline

Implementation Timeline			
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4 and Beyond
Regional Recipient			
Receive Designation			
Work with GPTC on advantages and benefits to one recipient			
	Become Sole Recipient for Bus Transportation		
Single Dispatch System			
Establish Regional Customer Information			
	Set-Up Dispatch Platform		
	Install Equipment on Buses and Vans		
		Expand and Improve System	
		Equipment Included as Buses/Vans Replaced	
Regional Services			
Contract one Express Bus Route			
Assume Responsibility, Improve and Expand One Route			
	Assume Responsibility, Improve and Expand second Route		
		Assume Responsibility, Improve and Expand third Route	
Research, Coordinate, and Plan Vanpools, Employment Market Services, and Transit Centers			

Supporting Materials

A. Attached are:

1. IC 36-9-3 – The authorizing legislation for Regional Transportation Authorities in Indiana.
2. The RBA Strategic and Operations Plan
3. Slide Handout Overview of RBA Proposal
4. RBA Highlights and FAQ's.
5. RBA Newsletters from September 2006, through June 2007

B. On the Internet: Chapters 2 & 4 of the Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan may be accessed through the NIRPC web site at www.nirpc.org.

C. Statement of Relationship to Other Existing or Proposed Economic Development Projects

A comprehensive approach to public transit in northwest Indiana will interconnect the Gary Chicago International Airport, the South Shore, new commuter rail lines, and lakefront redevelopment. Bus and demand response can play a roll in getting people to the trains, airplanes, jobs and recreational opportunities. The convenience of transit will increase the attractiveness of an area to vacationers, convention-goers, and other visitors.

D. Ethics Guidelines

Attached is the RBA Statement of Ethics.